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HEROISM OF THE RANK AND FILE.

EULOGY,

DECALOGUE AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE OF POST SUMNER, NO. 24, AND POST WINTHROP, NO. 28, G. A. R., MAY 31ST, 1868.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE UNION SOLDIERS SLAIN IN THE WAR FOR OUR UNION.

BY COLONEL A. J. H. DUGANNE.

COMRADES: The world is ruled by ideas, emotions, impulses, more than by laws, logic, or deliberations. A spark of thought kindles to a flame of action. The mob of a day overwhelms the dynasty of a century. A name builds up an empire.

It is the ideal that is power; the material is but force: it is the unseen fluid that kills; the visible lightning and the audible thunder only terrify.

We behold the hand of a buffoon uplifting a bloody dagger, and pointing with it a straight of honor^{honor} the Roman people out of monarchy overless publicanism. But the buffoon is Bruunwea, and his dagger is wet with the blood of will n^ored Lucretia, ideal and example of manly virtue.

We discern an impostor bestriding a camel, holding in one hand a roll of parchment, led the other brandishes a scimitar. Nations follow him; cities and kingdoms fall before his march. But the impostor is Mahomet; this book is the scripture of Islam; his sword is its interpreter; his idea is to found a new religion.

Later in the world's history, a barefooted monk, advancing with uplifted crucifix, leads forth uncounted multitudes of armed men to fight against the successors of Mahomet. But that monk is Peter the Hermit; his armies are the Crusaders; his idea and theirs is to

deliver Jerusalem from the Infidel, and redeem the Sepulchre of Christ.

And later still, in the lapse of centuries, another barefoot monk lifts up the Book of God, and, opening wide its pages, calls on kings and serfs to read them. It is Luther, and his idea is the Reformation.

And later yet, and in our own times, an old man, fired by mad enthusiasm, musters a band of zealots like himself, and yields his life in an attempt to strike the shackles from four million slaves. But the madman was John Brown, and after him came Abraham Lincoln; and the four million that were slaves shall be slaves no more forever.

Thus, always, an idea advances, leads, impels. It is the soul, whose body is action—whose outer robes are battles, histories, empires, revolutions. It is the magnet, drawing; the light, revealing; the heat, generating. A cause that is without an idea cannot survive.

This tissue of cotton threads, which I fling out before me—what is it? No thrill of life responds from it; no voice returns my invocation of it; no pressure vibrates on my lips as I enclasp and kiss it as a bride. Yet for this web and woof of simple cotton, spun by hand or loom, there shall be myriads of men ready to lay down their lives, as myriads have done; there shall be tears, and prayers, and embraces, and such deeds achieved as lift us

mortals to be demigods. For this tissue of threads—red, white, and blue—is the flag of my country. It is an emblem; it is a symbol; it is an embodied idea. Robing themselves in this drapery, men have wooed danger as a beloved bride, and died upon her bosom exultingly. Wrapped in its stately folds, they have lapsed from suffering into martyrdom—from glory into immortality. Death-stricken heroes have looked their last upon it, and smiled as though their mothers were blessing them. Fugitives from tyranny have caught its first gleams, with their hearts bounding upward to worship it. The sick have stretched out their feeble arms to it; the weary prisoner has yearned for its sight, “as the hart panteth for the water-brooks.” I have seen poor comrades in Southern captivity creeping out of their huts, under the darkness of midnight, and clustering together like shadows, to surround this treasured emblem, kept by day with jealous secrecy from the search of rebel guards. And I have seen them, those loyal and loving soldiers and sailors, rough men though they were, with tears in their eyes and with swelling bosoms, pass the precious folds of that cherished old flag from lip to lip, in the holy communion of patriotism.

Symbol of an idea—of manifold ideas—the flag of an army, or a people, or a nationality, or a cause—how immeasurable its influence how exalted its inspiration! Depress it, and the hearts of men sick within them; raise it, and those hearts become winged like eagles. Its tissues are woven into multitudinous memories; its colors are blended with infinite hopes. There is no thread of its web that is not moistened, no hue that is not gilded, with the priceless blood of heroism. Thus the flag becomes an emblem of faith, a beacon of aspirations, a cynosure of veneration. It writes, as with sunbeams upon ether, the name and the path of a cause which it marshals. Yet the flag itself is only an emblem. Its dazzle is but the reflex of an idea that dwells in the army or nation whose progress it foreruns and identifies. That idea may be patriotism, or religion, or liberty—whatever it be, it is the soul, whereof armies and nations are but bodily manifestations.

And it is to some tender or gallant quality in the man that a flag appeals so potently. I care not if he be common soldier or sailor, or

if his shoulder be doubly or trebly starred, his soul must thrill lovingly to the waving of his flag, or he is no true man in the hour of trial. We have rank and titles for leaders, princely guerdons for their services, monuments to their memories; but the idea of the cause which upraised these heroes may be sometimes more vital in a private's soul than in that of his chief commander. The piety of a true Christian is not measured by riches or by poverty. The idea of patriotism or of liberty is not written upon a parchment commission, but upon the living heart of a man. Bright sword of a captain, but the flames of those powder-black muskets at his left reach farther into the darkness of conflict.

I follow, with hushed breath, the firm tread of a column of these unnoticed heroes into line of battle, or the double-quick of their charge into the bowels of fiery batteries. There is no waver in that front—no gap in all those files. Who, then, shall I choose out as the hero-one? What matters it that the few wear shoulder-straps and the many have no badge of distinction? There is no hero-one—they are all heroes. Captain, corporal, guide, or color bearer, or drummer-boy—black-skinned or white—they are in one battle-line, and each man keeps his post in the march or the mêlée. Who, then, shall I choose as my hero—the soldier who is called general, or the soldier who is only known as “one of the rank and file”? I will single no one. They are all heroes.

“One of the rank and file,” I said; one of the undecorated line of nobility, who advances over lost battle-fields, to lay them with pledges of life-blood; one of living stones of those human avalanches, roll over batteries and bulwarks, and throw towers and armies, as an Alpine mountain-slide sweeps away peaceful hamlets. In the gazing world, there are but few manly objects in the great panorama of warfare—leaders on their battle-steeds, the flags riding upon cannon-smokes, the onset of squadrons, the movement of columns, the swift flash of a bayonet charge. Of the individual hearts beating through long lines, of the personalities of valor in those manifold ranks that cleave on death so devotedly, there is but one who hath perfect cognizance, and he is their Eternal Historian. To us, the vast enginery of conflict has merely physical significance. The soldier

is but one of its multitudinous cogs and wheels. We regard only the terrible machine and its directors. God alone sees the inner soul-works, that run in such wondrous unison.

Therefore, I remember with gladness, and rehearse with pride, the heroism of obscure merit, as well as of recognized fame. I rejoice in the daring of the noble wife of that Rhode Island sergeant — Brownell — who, in the bloody press of Roanoke fight, caught up the banner of a regiment, and fell, wounded, while bearing it to the front; but I find her equally

in the hospital-wards, nursing her ~~sister~~ husband and his dying comrades. I call the brave New Jersey corporal — John Lawrence—a hero, when I see him lying with both legs amputated, after that Roanoke fight, and raising his head from his cot to hear the news, and waving his blue cap, with three cheers, when he learns of a Union victory.

. . . I repeat with reverence the name of that gunner's mate—John Davis—of the Valley City steamer, who, in the fight at Elizabeth City, threw himself over a barrel of gunpowder, to shield it from the flames of bursting shells, while he served out ammunition to the cannoniers . . . And how can I forget the lofty heroism of that unknown sergeant at Fort Donelson, who was seen to throw himself before his line, and receive within his own loyal heart the rebel bullet that would have slain his captain? . . . These are but initials of the heroic catalogue that stands out, like *lumina* on the entablature of honor's temple; and yet there are numberless episodes of fortitude, and devotion, and unwearied zeal in the Republic's service, that will never be noted by the historian—never rewarded by earthly renown.

What holy sacrifices have consecrated the homes of our patriot volunteers, whose loyalty led them to the forefront of danger, and whose souls were sustained and strengthened by the hopes and prayers of dear ones left behind—the mother, who gave her first-born; the wife, who yielded her spouse; the sister who resigned her brother, and the maiden who parted with her betrothed; all priceless offerings upon the altar of our country—all pledges of a sublime faith in her cause!

What illustrations of all that was womanly and saint-like are to be met with in the obscure chronicle of hospital service—that in-

audible and unblazoned service wherein health and life were offered daily upon the altar of simple duty, made beautiful by the flowers of love and charity that enwreathed it! How blessed in the sight of heaven, how sacred in the thought of all good men, those numberless and nameless benefactions which interposed between the wounded soldier and his death, to smooth his passage from the world of warfare to the world of peace! Who shall say to me that the hospital was not a field of heroic effort? that the Sanitary Commission had no heroes enrolled under its banners? that the surgeon, the nurse, the unarmed chaplain might never win or claim the palm of merit such as fame bestows on the sword wielders and the death-doers in sanguinary conflict? I crown my heroes in all ranks; I clasp hands with noble ones in every sphere that is illumined by the steady torch of loyal and devoted service.

But it is only when the living idea that impels heroic natures finds voice or stamps out deeds more noticeable than the rest, that we are able to signalize some hero-man by name. Thus I behold brave Sergeant William Carney, in the bloody contest of Fort Wagner, clutching the falling colors of his regiment, and climbing up the hostile parapet, to plant them on its highest works; and holding them aloft under the rain of shot and shell; and folding them to his heart when our line was borne backward; and falling thus, with a shot in his bosom; and clasping the colors still with one hand, while the other strove to keep his life-blood back in the gaping wound; and crawling thus, slowly, slowly, from those fatal ramparts, out to his camp again; still hugging tightly to his breast the regimental flag, while with scarcely articulate voice, he answers to the plaudits of his comrades, black and white: "I did my duty, boys—the dear old flag never touched the ground!"

And at the same eventful fight, I see the son of one who was a slave—the son of Frederick Douglass—mounting, foremost of our troops, upon the walls of Wagner, while his voice rang out in trumpet tones: "Come on, boys, fight for God and Governor Andrew!"

And I follow that bold Pennsylvanian, Sergeant Bruner, of the Twenty-third Wisconsin Volunteers, in the fight at Port Gibson, where he caught the colors from their disabled bearer!

and planted them on the ramparts amid a storm of bullets. And again, at Champion Hill, where he seized the flag, as our line was breaking, and crying out, "Boys, follow! don't flinch from your duty!" led the regiment into order and victory. And once more, at the battle of Big Black, under the eye of Grant, when the valiant Sergeant led his men against a battery that had dismounted one of our cannon and dispersed its supporters—twice in the mêlée was Bruner made a prisoner, and twice his comrades rescued him; and he brought to General Grant the last one of three rebel flags captured by his own bold hand from the enemy. It is in the hearts of such men as this that the idea of a cause is enshrined, like a jewel in some golden casket.

And that old man-of-war's-man, William Reid, in his fiftieth year, one of the noble sailors whose bravery almost redeemed the folly or treachery of their flag-captain at Galveston; I can see him, in my mind's eye, as he stood on the Owasco's deck, his left hand well-nigh shot away, and a shot-wound in his shoulder, where the blood oozed through his shirt, while holding still a rifle in his grasp, he continued to fire upon the foe. "Go below and get your wounds dressed," said the master's mate. "No, sir!" the veteran replied: "so long as there's fighting to be done, I'll stay on deck!"

What patient courage, what quiet self-devotion is common to the sailor at his gun and the soldier in his ranks! so common, indeed, that no note is made of it; so habitual, that it is looked upon as the mere routine of duty. But assuredly there is a motive power deeper than mere routine to inspire these unrewarded heroes of our nation. Was there not true nobility in that seaman, Samuel Woods, who, when serving his gun, with resolute courage, yet found heart to plunge into the stream to save a drowning shipmate, and who, after the battle, knelt beside his wounded comrades, nursing them like a tender woman as he had fought beside them like a hero man! Was there not cool and provident valor in that coxswain of the Wabash, Edward Ringgold, who, in service with the howitzer corps, performed his duty with such faithfulness, and hearing that the powder ran low, passed up, through all the fiery line, with his shirt slung over his shoulders and filled with ammunition that he had brought two miles from the rear!

Well did these seamen deserve the medal they won for "gallantry in action."

I have spoken of the fight at Fort Wagner, and of its heroes, Douglas and Carney, whose African veins were flooded with such patriotic blood, and whose dark skins covered such trusty hearts, as their captains of purest lineage might well be proud to recognize. Such men deserved to be led by the chief who died for them—that immortal son of Massachusetts sires, the gallant Colonel Shaw.

Let us thank God that everywhere, in all the bloody years of our righteous & treason, the names of such faithful Americans are recorded in the pages of impartial history! Not among generals only—brave and meritorious though they be—need we look for examples and models of patriotism. The hero of a knapsack is grand as the hero of a baton! Martyrs ascend to heaven from rank and file as luminously as from the field and staff. Poor Plummer Tidd, who had fought with John Brown at Harper's Ferry, and who lay dying on his cot with typhus fever, while the batteries of Fort Donelson thundered in his ears, was no less a hero of liberty than if he had fallen at his sergeant's post in battle. "Is our side winning?" he gasped, as the gun-boat rocked under the concussion of artillery, and when the chaplain answered "Yes!" the brave man said, "Thank God!" and died!

John Beman, the humble watchman of a steamer, hanged by the rebels to a tree in Mississippi, because of being a loyal man, deserves his place upon the hero-tablet, not less than our martyred Abraham Lincoln. "I will die before I take the Southern oath," this bold Norwegian cried; and they swung his body upward; but his soul soared higher than traitors can reach.

"Don't mind me, boys! Go on with the fight!" said Orderly Sergeant Goodfellow, at Bethel fight. He gave his musket to a comrade, and sank dying in his place; a hero-soldier, promoted in death to equal rank with Greble and Winthrop, who fell not far from him.

There was an old man of Gettysburg, whose musket was first shouldered in the war of 1812; whose head was white with the snows of seventy years; and when he saw the base flag of disunion blotting the sunshine of his cottage-sill, he took down an old State musket

from the wall, moulded a score of bullets, as they used to do in the times of old, and made ready to defend his homestead. Anon came the Stars and Stripes through Cumberland Valley, and the gray haired farmer presented himself to our soldiers. "Take me with you!" said the man of three score and ten; "I can still peer over a musket-sight!" And they took him with them—those brave Wisconsin boys to whom he showed himself; and that true-hearted veteran fought in our ranks at Gettysburg, and was left with three wounds

in field, in sight almost of his own hearthstone. God be thanked that the veteran survived the dread conflict, and that he will, at the last, which I hear is close at hand, lay down his gray head in peace by his cottage on the sacred ground of Gettysburg. Worthy to bear the name of Burns—the free-souled Scotch bard—was this old fighter for the Republic! Poor though he may be, he will bequeath to his children a heritage of honor that Lee and Beauregard, with all their chivalry, have no longer in their bestowal.

And I am reminded here of those gallant gunners of Gettysburg, who died upon the "Round Top," as they whirled their cannon to the front of battle. Here let me recall the names of Weed and Hazlett, recorded in the rude but graphic verse of a loyal ballad:

"On to the Round Top! the Round Top we gain!
Falls gallant Weed from a ball—is he slain?
Prone on the earth he lies heavily sighing;
Near him lie gallant men, wounded and dying.

"Hazlett, come hither," sighed Weed, as he lay;
"Hither, my friend—I have something to say!"
Hazlett speeds forward, bends down, lifts his head;
"Whispers a minie-ball—Hazlett lies dead!"

"Dead ere Weed utters the word he would speak;
Dead are both heroes, with cheek close to cheek;
Clungled their thoughts as they waft their last breath;
Clasping each other—united in death."

In the days to come our heroes of rank and file will be cherished in tradition as we now cherish the "Liberty Boys" and "Marion's Men." Ballads will chronicle their "hand-to-hand" fights, and their "hair-breadth 'scapes" on field and flood. It is of their examples that our future nation must eat and drink, that it may become robust in patriotism. "God keep their memory green!"

Give flowers! bring flowers! of every hue,
From garden-bed and field,
To deck the green above the hearts
That made the Northern shield.

Ask lilies for their palest buds,
And violets for their blue,

And twine them with the greenest leaves
For those who died for you!

And when the other Junes shall bloom
Through all the years to be,
Bring flowers as sweet and fair for those
Who died to make us free!

The heroes and martyrs of our Republic are guarantees which God vouchsafes for its future. Every drop of blood spilled in defence of a free nation, in a righteous cause, is a jewelled pledge of some blessing to posterity. What matter if gold be banished for a season from the public purse? No nation's treasury is bankrupt that has store of patriotic memories. Brave deeds are better than ingots.

I hail the legacy of noble deeds bequeathed by our war to immortality—that inestimable heritage which we claim this day, showing our title to it by these flowers which we reverently strew in memory of faithful service sanctified to us and to our nation. It is a heritage which may not be alienated, and cannot be squandered. It is the patrimony of freedom.

What grand contributions this wondrous treasure comprises! how sweet and holy, how loyal and liberal, are the donations of heroism! They descend to us in the streamlets from hill-tops and mountain pass-ways, where Liberty builds her stronghold, and dwells in sunshine and starlight! They look up to us from the tender eyes of daisies that grow over woodland graves! They whisper in the land-breezes that blow through sword-won valleys; they are crested on the sea-waves that break upon blood-bought beaches!

And here let me invoke the glorified host of nameless men, who have fallen upon the marches and battle-fields of Freedom! Here let me apostrophize the unknown armies of martyrs who have laid down their lowly lives for Liberty in every era and upon every soil!

O dumb and traceless shades! O misty semblances of humanity! receding into the dimness of immemorial centuries! Ye multitudes, whose weary journeyings left no footprints, and whose fall awoke no echo! Was it your destiny to be barren of fruit for the future? to be absorbed, as clouds, into the ocean of time, leaving no reflex of your transit upon earth or in the heavens?

I think that my soul can recognize a sweet response to its invocation—a voiceless yet intelligible reply, down-flowing, as from choirs of invisible spirits, in harmonies that interpret

both Past and Present. I fancy those misty darknesses which ensbroud the heroes and patriots and martyrs of forgotten generations have opened sometimes into vistas of immortal glory, revealing glimpses of the great White Throne; and that, out from the overpowering splendor, unsyllabled music glides into my heart, as of blessed ones chanting eternally.

"Clouds we are!" they sing, "but clouds are footstools for the Infinite! Clouds we are! but clouds of witnesses! testifying for evermore in heaven, as we testified on earth, the hope, the promise, and the assurance of Freedom for humanity!"

Let us leave with Our Father in heaven the records which earth hath lost! They rest in celestial archives. Enough for us to cherish the examples that descend from our fathers, and to multiply them by thoughts and deed which shall be memorials for our children hereafter!

Flowers for the valiant Dead
Who for the Union bled!
Let all the summers shed
Sweet's on our brave!

Let all the years renew
Liberty's colors true,
Plant the Red, White, and Blue
Over each grave!

Red rose for valor sow —
Lilies for honor strew,

And for the hearts below
Violets blue.

So shall the years to be
Say to our children free,
Liberty's colors three
Still are for you!

Lightly let flowers enfold
Pledges worth more than gold:
Lay on the lowly mould
Lily and rose:

Pledges that Freedom's seed,
Planted at Runnymede,
Up out of thorn and weed
Evermore grows!

Out from these ashes mute
Freedom's wide branches shoot—
Liberty's lofty fruit
Beckons the slave,

Soon to these altars dumb,
Grandly, at beat of drum,
All the fair lands shall come,
Blessing our brave!

Come, where the valiant host
Loving their country most,
In her dread Pentecost
Yielded their souls!

Come, at the Whitsuntide,
Counting, with love and pride,
Every true man who died
Still on the rolls!

So, through the marching years,
Mingling their manly tears,
Mustered by rosy biers,
Soldiers shall stand:

So, o'er each lowly grave,
Freedom's high flag shall wave,
Blessing the dead who gave
Life to the land!

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